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WASHINGTON LETTER.

WASHINGTON, DEC. 20, 1895.

For the first time in the history of the Geological Survey, the annual report of the Director is submitted and printed to date. Always the most attractive of the Governmental reports, it is this year more so, on account of the information it has of the latest results of the important interests under its control.

Speaking more directly of its geographic work during 1895, it is to be noted that $159,200 was allotted to topography. Of this amount it was provided by law that $35,000 should be expended west of the 97th meridian, and one-third of the remainder west of the 103d meridian. The proportion allotted to New York was $10,000, to Georgia, South Dakota, Nebraska and Oregon the same, to California and Colorado $20,000 each, to Texas $12,000, and to eleven other States smaller sums.

This being the first report of Charles D. Walcott, the successor of Maj. John W. Powell, who successfully organized and for fourteen years directed the large and highly important operations of the Survey, it is gratifying to know that the new Director did not find it desirable to make any radical changes either in the policy or personnel of the administration. The changes made have been in the nature of readjustments intended to meet new conditions. These readjustments, briefly outlined, are: the raising of the standard of quality of the topographic map; the representation on all maps hereafter surveyed in the public-land States, of the land-subdivision lines, and, when possible, the location of the position of township and section corners, and the determination of their altitude; the enlargement of the work of resurvey of areas, the existing maps of which are, from any cause, defective or inadequate for the proper representation of the areal and economic geology; the planning of a system of triangulation to supplement that already done by the Coast and Geodetic Survey and by the Geological Survey.

The topographic branch of the Survey has two divisions, viz.,

Triangulation and Topography. The latter division made surveys during the season of 1894–95 in twenty-one States, viz.:

STATE.	SCALE OF PUBLICATION.		CONTOUR INTERVAL.
	1:62500	1:125000	
	SQUARE MILES.	SQUARE MILES.	FEET.
Maine	500	..	20
Vermont	750	..	20
New York	750	..	20
Pennsylvania and New Jersey	1,000	..	20
West Virginia and Maryland	..	1,500	100
Virginia	..	500	100
Tennessee	..	500	100
Georgia	..	1,500	50
Minnesota	500	..	20
North Dakota	..	2,000	20
South Dakota	..	2,225	20
Wyoming	..	1,000	50
Nebraska	250	4,500	20
Colorado	*575	*3,000	50 and 100
Texas	..	2,350	20 and 100
Idaho	..	2,000	100
Washington	300	..	25
Oregon	..	1,000	100
California	3,175	500	25 and 100
Total	7,800	22,575	

* Besides 38 square miles mapped on scale of 1:25000.

The following topographic sheets were completed during 1894–1895:

LOCALITY AND NAME OF SHEET.	SCALE.	CONTOUR INTERVAL.
		Feet.
MAINE:		
Sebago Lake	1:62500	20
Bridgton	1:62500	20
VERMONT:		
Strafford	1:62500	20
Pawlet	1:62500	20
Manchester	1:62500	20
NEW YORK:		
Ticonderoga	1:62500	20
Hoosick	1:62500	20
Fonda (part in 1893)	1:62500	20
Lake Placid (part in 1893)	1:62500	20
Ontario Beach	1:62500	20
PENNSYLVANIA:		
Norristown	1:62500	20
Chester	1:62500	20
Philadelphia (revision)	1:62500	20
Germantown (revision)	1:62500	20
MARYLAND and WEST VIRGINIA:		
Piedmont (revision)	1:125000	100

LOCALITY AND NAME OF SHEET.	SCALE.	CONTOUR INTERVAL.
		Feet.
GEORGIA:		
Monroe	1:125000	50
MINNESOTA:		
St. Paul	1:62500	20
Minneapolis	1:62500	20
NORTH DAKOTA:		
Valley City	1:125000	20
SOUTH DAKOTA:		
Huron	1:125000	20
WYOMING:		
Sundance	1:125000	50
NEBRASKA:		
Lincoln	1:62500	20
Hebron	1:125000	20
York	1:125000	20
Superior	1:125000	20
Grand Island	1:125000	20
COLORADO:		
Cripple Creek	1:25000	50
Telluride	1:62500	100
Rico	1:62500	100
Pueblo (revision)	1:125000	50
Walsenburg (revision)	1:125000	50
Nepesta (revision)	1:125000	50
TEXAS:		
Valentine	1:125000	100
Fort Davis	1:125000	100
IDAHO:		
Weiser	1:125000	100
CALIFORNIA:		
Yosemite (part revision)	1:125000	100
Los Angeles (revision)	1:62500	25
Pasadena	1:62500	25
Santa Ana	1:62500	25
Downey	1:62500	25
San Francisco	1:62500	25
Cucamonga	1:62500	25
Pomona	1:62500	25
Redondo	1:62500	25
Las Bolsas	1:62500	25
San Mateo	1:62500	25
San Bernardino	1:62500	25
Anaheim	1:62500	25
San Pedro	1:62500	25

Formerly the manuscript maps, as prepared by the Topographic Branch, were approved and sent to the engraver without special editorial examination or revision. These manuscripts, produced by many men working independently, were unequal in character and quality, and it has been decided to refer to an editor of topographic maps every topographic manuscript submitted for publication. Mr. Marcus Baker, who has served continuously as Secretary of the United States Board on Geographic Names, has been assigned to this position. The work is made to cover not only

new maps, but all the old ones when a revision is to be made for the purpose of printing a new edition, or when any sheet is to be prepared for use as a topographic base for the maps of one of the Geologic Folios. But few of the 900 topographic atlas sheets engraved have had the form or application of the geographic names upon them authoritatively established.

In the matter of the survey and subdivision of the lands in the Indian Territory authorized by the last Congress, the subdivision has not gone on as rapidly as was anticipated, owing to a mistaken idea regarding the character of the country. It was assumed that it was mainly an open country, in which subdivision could be carried on rapidly. As a matter of fact, three-fourths of it are heavily timbered, and not less than one-fourth is mountainous. The timber and undergrowth are commonly so dense as to require continuous chopping in order to open the lines, so that the rate of progress depends upon the rate at which the lines can be chopped out. The open country which is found in the central part of the Cherokee Nation has not yet been reached. In this the work will progress far more rapidly than elsewhere. While the survey and subdivision of this Territory is going on, an accurate topographic map of the country is also being prepared.

For several years the Division of Topography has been engaged in compiling a list of positions determined within the United States which are believed to be of sufficient accuracy for use in the preparation of its maps. As a method of making the compilation of public use, it has been issued as a Bulletin of the Survey, under the title of "A Dictionary of Geographic Positions in the United States. By Henry Gannett." The list comprises between 9,000 and 10,000 positions by latitude and longitude, with abbreviations indicating the authority, and references to the publications in which other data relating to the positions may be found. Ninety-nine per cent. of all the determinations have been made by the Coast Survey, the Geological, Lake, Hayden, Powell, Wheeler, and New York State Surveys, and Mississippi and Missouri River Commissions.

Mr. Gannett describes the work of each of these nine organizations, the parts of the country in which their work has been done, its extent, and the methods employed both in field and office, and characterizes the degree of accuracy which may be expected in their determinations.

An important question has been reconsidered and determined relating to the scale of publication of maps in the Geologic Atlas in the case of States, which like Maryland and those of New

England, have been surveyed on a scale of one mile to the inch. It having been shown that there can be much speedier publication and no corresponding loss of scientific or educational value in publishing on a scale of two miles to the inch, this scale has been adopted for the Geologic Atlas, except in special cases.

Following is a tabulated statement of the present condition of publication of the Geologic Atlas:

GEOLOGIC FOLIOS READY FOR DISTRIBUTION.

NO.	NAME OF SHEET.	STATE.	LIMITING MERIDIANS.	LIMITING PARALLELS.	AREA IN SQUARE MILES.	PRICE IN CENTS.
1	Livingston	Montana	110°–111°	45°–46°	3,354	25
2	Ringgold	Georgia, Tennessee	85°–85° 30′	34° 30′–35°	980	25
3	Placerville	California	120° 30′–121′	38° 30′–39°	932	25
4	Kingston	Tennessee	84° 30′–85°	35° 30′–36°	969	25
5	Sacramento	California	121°–121° 30′	38° 30′–39°	932	25
6	Chattanooga	Tennessee	85°–85° 30′	35°–35° 30′	975	25
7	Pike's Peak	Colorado	105°–105° 30′	38° 30′–39°	932	25
8	Sewanee	Tennessee	85° 30′–86°	35°–35° 30′	975	25
9	Anthracite—Crested Butte	Colorado	106° 45′–107° 15′	38° 45′–39°	465	50
10	Harper's Ferry	Virginia, W. Virginia, Maryland	77° 30′–78°	39°–39° 30′	925	25
11	Jackson	California	120° 30′–121°	38°–38° 30′	938	25
12	Estillville	Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee	82° 30′–83°	36° 30′–37°	957	25
13	Fredericksburg	Maryland, Virginia	77°–77° 30′	38°–38° 30′	938	25
14	Staunton	Virginia, W. Virginia	79°–79° 30′	38°–38° 30′	938	25

GEOLOGIC FOLIOS IN PRESS.

NO.	NAME OF SHEET.	STATE.	LIMITING MERIDIANS.	LIMITING PARALLELS.	AREA IN SQUARE MILES.	PRICE IN CENTS.
15	Lassen Peak	California	121°–122°	40°–41°	..	..
16	Knoxville	Tennessee, N. Carolina	83° 30′–84°	35° 30′–36°	..	..
17	Marysville	California	121° 30′–122°	39°–39° 30′	..	..
18	Smartsville	do	121°–121° 30′	39°–39° 30′	..	..
19	Stevenson	Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee	85° 30′–86°	34° 30′–35°	..	..
20	Cleveland	Tennessee	84° 30′–85°	35°–35° 30′	..	..

There is in course of printing, also, a special map of the Cripple Creek mining district of Colorado, which will form a part of the Pike's Peak folio, mentioned above.

The Hydrographic Division of the Survey, Mr. F. H. Newell in charge, has been engaged in the study of water supply and in the measurement of the volume of water in various streams, mainly in the western part of the country. A Bulletin recently issued details the earlier investigations of the Division in the western interior, and Potomac basins; also a list of discharge measurements of various streams in the United States.

The press of the Geological Survey has been one of considerable activity during the sixteen years of its existence, as evinced by its "List of Publications," recently issued. It counts, 16 Annual Reports in 26 large 8vo vols.; 24 quarto volumes of Monographs; 130 Bulletins; 10 volumes of Statistical Papers; about 900 atlas sheets, and 28 special maps; an aggregate of 1018 publications, or about 63 in a year.

Biological Map.—The biological map of North America on a large scale which has occupied the attention of the Department of Agriculture for a few years past now covers, as far as preliminary work is concerned, the greater part of the United States, except eastern Oregon, north and central Nevada, parts of New Mexico and Texas, and some of the Eastern States. In addition, a detailed survey has been made, with a degree of accuracy equal to or exceeding that of the best topographic maps available, of large parts of California, western Oregon and Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, Utah, Arizona, and a number of the Southern States. This map when completed will show the boundaries of life areas; thus saving large sums of money now expended annually in futile efforts to make crops grow in places climatically unsuited to their needs. They will also be useful in indicating the areas subject to and those exempt from the ravages of destructive insects and other pests, and also those in which certain diseases of plants and animals are likely to flourish. Congress authorized this comprehensive investigation of the geographic distribution of animals and plants in 1890; thus in effect establishing a new survey—a Biological Survey—of the country.

The northern boundary of both arid and humid divisions of what is known as the Austral zone (which covers the southern tier of States and much of California) has been followed completely across the continent. This zone is considered of the greatest importance because of the large number of valuable crops that grow within it.

The preparation of this very practical map is in charge of the Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy of the Department of Agriculture; of which Dr. C. Hart Merriam is the Chief. Secretary Morton says the name of this Division is unfortunate, as it conveys an erroneous idea of the nature of its work.

A national map on a large scale, to show all the macadamized and gravel roads in the United States, is another new undertaking of the Department of Agriculture. Upon this map new roads are laid down as fast as built. The maps of Pennsylvania, Indiana and New Jersey are already sufficiently advanced to present most interesting facts, and those of other States are progressing.

ALASKA.—The Governor of Alaska, in his Report to the Secretary of the Interior, 1895, gives an interesting account of his travels, 2,000 miles more or less, westward from Sitka, within the bounds of Alaska. He visited Kadiak, Wood Island, Karluk, Sand Point, Unga, Belkovski and Unalaska.

At Kadiak are now located a deputy Collector of Customs, a U. S. Commissioner, a deputy Marshal, and a good school. At Wood Island (village) are two churches and a school, but only 150 people. At Karluk are about 600 people in the fishing season. There are four large canneries and a school house. The Governor says a Justice of the Peace and a constable would be useful here. At Belkovski are a school house, church and 190 people. Sand Point has a Custom-house, store and warehouse. The deputy Collector, his wife, the storekeeper, and three Russian families make up the town. Unga has a church and school, and 200 people. Unalaska has a deputy Collector, a Commissioner, a deputy Marshal, three school houses, a church and 300 inhabitants. It is the headquarters for whalers and Government vessels; also the central point of the Alaska Commercial Company. The Island of St. George has a population of about 100, and St. Paul double that number. The annual census for the past six years shows a gradual increase. On each island there is a church and a school house. Population, church and school house would probably all disappear with the extinction of the seal fisheries.

The amount of gold produced from the mines of Alaska during the past year has done much to confirm the opinion that this territory will be a permanent mining country. There are indications that the valley of the Yukon River is the most extensive field of placer mines discovered since the finding of gold in California. It is estimated that there are about 1,500 miners living in that part of Alaska. The miners are about 1,000 miles from Sitka.

It is not generally known that there is located at Sitka a society having for its object the collection and preservation of specimens illustrative of the natural history and ethnology of Alaska, and publications relating thereto. It has gathered curios and skins, specimens of Indian and Eskimo handiwork, and all sorts of ivory carvings from every part of the Territory. Dr. Sheldon Jackson has furnished the Society with a commodious fire-proof building.

The Commissioner of the General Land Office reports that he has passed upon 101 surveys of public lands in Alaska. There is no Surveyor-General of public lands in this Territory, the functions of that officer devolving upon the U. S. Marshal, without compensation. The results of an investigation by a Government inspector reveal a remarkably alarming condition of methods in conducting public business, for which the present official, however, should not be held responsible.

Mr. Marcus Baker, in a recent address, called attention to the marked deflection of the Alaska boundary line on Canadian maps since 1884. In that year an official map showed the boundary as passing up Behm Canal, an arm of the sea some 60 or 70 miles west of Portland Canal. Another Canadian map three years later carries the line across the head of Lynn Canal in such a manner as to throw its headwaters into British territory. Still later Canadian maps carry the line not across the head of the canal, but near its mouth, some 60 or 70 miles south of the former line.

The Superintendent of the Coast Survey has asked Congress for an additional appropriation of $50,000 for the purpose of running definite lines of demarcation on the Upper Yukon and its tributaries, and to provide for the contingency of surveys which may be required along the boundary in unforeseen localities. The Secretary of State in forwarding the estimate remarks that "The determination and marking of the 141st meridian in that part which by treaty forms the boundary between Alaska and British Columbia is not provided for by any existing treaty, and negotiations to that end may probably be begun in the near future."

Coast Survey.—Tide Tables for the Atlantic and Pacific coast, heretofore issued separately by the Coast Survey, are now consolidated, and extend to the world at large. In the volume for 1896, recently issued, the predicted time and height of every high and every low water throughout the year are given for seventy principal ports or stations. These predictions are extended to about three thousand subordinate stations by means of tidal differences and ratios.

The Coast Survey has completed the triangulation along the line of the 39th parallel from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. This means a great deal to astronomers and geographers.

HYDROGRAPHIC OFFICE.—The expansion of the work of the U. S. Hydrographic Office is mainly on the Great Lakes and Pacific Ocean. The character of the work in the first named direction has caused it to meet with general approval. The policy of the office, says Capt. Sigsbee, is to shape its work and publications so strictly to nautical needs as to avoid, as far as possible, duplicating the work already well done by other branches of the Government. It is remarkable that the immense commercial interests of the Great Lakes had not sooner received benefits similar to those conferred by the Government on the commerce of the seas. A Pilot Chart (similar in scope to the North Atlantic and North Pacific Pilot Charts), Sailing Directions, Sailing Charts, and Notices to Mariners for the Great Lakes, have been issued for the first time during the past year.

A trial issue of the Pilot Chart of the North Pacific was made in January, 1894. Its issue as a permanent publication was authorized by Congress in the same year. The first regular issue was in July. August was omitted, but since that time it has regularly appeared. It may be long before it reaches the plane occupied by the North Atlantic Chart; but this condition is due entirely to the lack of observers cruising in the Pacific.

The Hydrographic Office desires to construct trustworthy charts of the north coast of South America, where the interests of United States commerce are increasing. The stretch of coast lying to the westward of the mouth of the Orinoco River, which is unsurveyed and about which little is known, is more than 500 miles in length.

UTAH.—The forty-fifth State comes into the Union with a population of 247,324,—less than that of the District of Columbia, or of Oklahoma, but many times larger than that of Nevada.

The latest official accounts from the Territory presents satisfactory conditions of industrial resources and a somewhat phenomenal development of commercial interests. All the Federal officials agree in the opinion that polygamy is dead beyond the possibility of even an attempted resurrection.

NEW MEXICO.—W. T. Thornton, Governor of this Territory, claims, in his late Report to the Secretary of the Interior, that there is no portion of the Union possessing such splendid climatic conditions as exist in that Territory. No extremes of heat or cold,

with clear, bright skies. He quotes the following records from the U. S. Weather Office at Santa Fé:

	1892.	1893.	1894.
Average temperature, degrees	49.1	49.4	48.9
Maximum temperature, "	90.	89.	86.
Minimum temperature, "	1.	5.	0.
Average relative humidity, per cent	43.	38.	41.
Total rainfall, inches	11.62	14.94	13.31
Number of cloudless days	248.	235.	213.

NOTES.—"Highways of Commerce," is the title of the State Department Guide Book which will supply to merchants, travellers and students authentic information concerning the great highways of traffic and travel in foreign countries. It is a valuable compilation. No traffic line is mentioned unless it carries passengers, through mails or freight in considerable quantities ; nor are subsidiary or military lines discussed.

There is a vast amount of information in this 800-page volume. Without being confronted with weary pages of statistical tables, the reader will find, under the name of any country on the globe, a concise account of its railway, navigable water-way, and highway facilities ; rates of fare and freight ; and numerous maps of railway, steamship, and river routes.

In the apportionment of railway lines by continents, America occupies the first rank, having 31,394½ miles more than the remainder of the world. The average cost of European lines has been $121,260.88 per mile ; in the United States, $59,298.12. The cheapest railways are in Australia, where, in the western portion, the price has been as low as $21,723 per mile.

Under legislation of the last Congress, all military records, such as muster and pay rolls, orders, and reports relating to the personnel or the operations of the armies of the Revolutionary War and of the War of 1812 have been transferred to the War Department to be preserved, indexed, and prepared for publication. A large mass has been so transferred and the records relating to the personnel of the Revolutionary War have been indexed and arranged for use. The recent revival of interest in matters pertaining to the Revolution, due largely to the efforts of the various patriotic societies, has given rise to a steadily increasing demand for information from the military records of that war. The Department is now answering promptly all inquiries relative to officers and enlisted

men, and is furnishing so much of the military history of those whose names are borne on the rolls as is afforded by the rolls themselves.

It is estimated that there is enough original manuscript selected from the naval records of the Civil War to make between 20 and 30 volumes. Volume 2 has appeared, and two more volumes are expected soon. The demand for this publication has been large. The reports of Union commanders are full and fairly complete. The Confederate records are not equally complete, due to the great difficulty found in collecting them, and also to the fact that a large part of the archives of the Confederate Navy Department was burned at the close of the war.

The concluding volumes of the first Series of the Records of the Union and Confederate armies are nearly in type. The second Series, relating to prisoners of war, has been begun, and the first volume well advanced in printing. H.